



In the Entrepreneurial Spotlight

Bootstrap Marketing Using Databases

Although social media has grown in its importance for attracting customers, a recent study shows that e-mail marketing is still the most common tool for customer acquisition (used by 86.3 percent of both B2B and B2C companies) followed by direct mail (used by 69.0 percent of businesses). Although they may seem a bit old-fashioned, e-mail and direct mail are still the workhorses of promotional channels. Businesses can purchase lists of contacts through a variety of services that can offer highly targeted lists that are specific to the type of customer, size, and geographic location. However, buying access to these services is not cheap for a small business. Many of them charge as much as several hundred dollars a month. Clever bootstrapping entrepreneurs

find ways to build a database of potential customers without subscribing to costly database services.

Jerell Harris, president of QuickMed Collect, built his own database for his company that collects medical waste from private physician practices, funeral homes, surgical centers, and other professionals who accumulate regulated waste. Rather than purchase data through a service, which Harris could not afford, he turned instead to the local library. "I found a Web site called Referenceusa.com, which is accessible, without charge, at the library. The Web site offers access to a verifiable database that has 14 million existing businesses and 4 million new businesses. In addition, one can search for businesses using NAICS codes,